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ABSTRACT

Who holds the ultimate authority for the education of U.S. children--teachers or parents? Although the relationship between home and school has changed dramatically over the decades, this book argues that it has always been a political one. The book also uncovers how and why the balance of power has shifted over time. Starting with parental dominance in the mid-nineteenth century, the book chronicles how schools' growing bureaucratization and professionalization allowed educators to gain increasing control over the schooling and lives of the children they taught. At the center of the story are parent-teacher associations (PTAs), which played a crucial role in transforming an adversarial parent-teacher relationship into a collaborative one. The book reveals how disagreements among the PTAs' national, regional, and local leaders sometimes undermined the organization's effectiveness and shows the ways in which parents have been controlled by educators through PTAs. In the 1920s and 1930s, schools expanded their responsibility for children's well-being outside the classroom and sowed the seeds for later conflict as schools came to be held accountable for solving society's problems. Finally chronicled are recent decades, in which a breakdown of trust, racial tension, and parents' rights have once again placed parents and schools at odds. Following an introduction, chapters in the book are: (1) "From Adversaries to Advocates"; (2) "Home Rule or Ruled at Home?"; (3) "In Search of Influence or Authority?"; (4) "Heard but Not Seen"; (5) "Twenty-Four Hours a Day"; (6) "From Advocates to Adversaries"; and "Epilogue: Recurring Themes." (Each chapter includes notes. Contains 9 illustrations and a bibliographic note.) (BT)

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